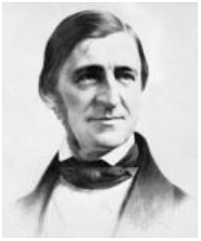
The Lotus Bulletin
The Bulletin of The Lotus Center for Wellbeing and Peace

www.thelotuscenter.org Issue 4 – April 2010 info@thelotuscenter.org

To know that you do not know is the best. To pretend to know when you do not know is a disease

Lao-Tzu



When it is darkest, men see the stars.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

A Human Thought is an actual existence, and a Force and Power, capable of acting upon and controlling matter as well as mind.

Albert Pike

Spring is in the air. As the rhyme goes, April showers bring May flowers. New life and new possibilities are at hand. The cycle of death and birth mirrors the potential that each day carries for endings and new beginnings. In some places around the world, spring cleaning is a common practice that is done in this season because it symbolizes a fresh start. This household practice consists of cleaning, organizing, and getting rid of items that are no longer useful and just taking up space.

What an interesting thought. How valuable would it be if we took the arrival of this beautiful time to reevaluate our inner "clutter"? Then we could review our inventory and maybe come to realize that we are holding on to things that are *no longer useful and just taking up space*. What is in the closet of your heart? How many unresolved issues have you swept under the rug? Is there regret, resentment, and pain? This brings us to one of the most magical words in the English language – Forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a key that has the power to unlock the doors to action and freedom. That is where the magic lies. Forgive yourself. Forgive others. Be kind to your heart. Letting go of the unfulfilling thoughts and emotions will liberate you and allow you to move forward. By doing so, you will create space within yourself for new experiences…new life...and you will release others from this cage as well. Alexander Pope once said, "To err is human, to forgive is divine".

Spring Detox Retreat

Get ready for summer!

Find refuge from routine.
Join us on May 7, 8 & 9
for spring purification program

Restore and balance all levels of your being:
physical
emotional
and spiritual.

A Path to Choose

By Rima Hamade

Allow me to introduce myself. I am the soft whisper that calls out to you as you go about your day. I am that feeling that touches you ever so subtly. I am the message in the events that take place around you. I am your reflection… I am The Path.

There is an art to doing just about anything. And what an art form it is to be able to achieve mastery in Life! Your life is incredibly helpful in this regard because it provides you with a mirror of how you are doing.

This is what is meant by your reflection. By increasing your awareness, whether it is in situations or in your relationships with other people, you will have a clearer picture of what is going on inside of you. It is a very interesting phenomenon.

Life reflects back to you what you give out to life. Or to put it in a sort of formula: outflow = inflow. If you look around and notice that there is not enough kindness in your life, go out into the world and shower everyone you see with kindness. It will come back to you tenfold. If you feel that there is a lack somewhere in you, go out and spread the opposite of that lack at every corner. Your reality will shift to match you. If

you feel that your partner isn't listening to you or validating your emotions, listen to them and validate them. The changes will amaze you

Shallow things only matter when the deeper essence is missing

On a more profound level, you have the ability to give YOURSELF what you want and need. This is very powerful because of the simple fact that it means you are not dependent on anyone in order to change the things that make you unhappy. If you feel that at work you are not appreciated by others, learn to appreciate yourself and give yourself that acceptance. Can you guess what will start to happen?

This feeling of "*unappreciation*" is a signal from your higher self to you that you do not value and appreciate yourself and you need to be aware of that and do something about it! Keep in mind that the shallow things in this existence only matter when the deeper essence is missing. Once you are connected to that deeper essence, you can enjoy all that abounds without being attached to it. The fear of loss is gone. And once fear dissolves, the heart opens and love comes rushing in. For you see, love and fear cannot exist within you at the same time. Choose!

May the reflections that surround you guide you on your journey towards self-fulfillment!

Excerpts from
"A Course in Miracles"

I am responsible for what I see.
I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide upon the goal
I would achieve.
And everything that seems to happen to me
I ask for, and receive as I have asked.

"All other beings whom you perceive as separate from yourself
Are, in truth, but aspects, or facets of that Oneness,
Which is, indeed, but your Self.

You are, in fact, invulnerable.
There is nothing outside yourself
That can have any effect, of any kind
Upon you, or your experience,
Or your awareness.

Breathe Neat with a Jala Neti

By Olga Pavlova

Just before we 'take off' let me introduce to you a very close friend of all yoga practitioners. Extremely practical, cute, small, light ***Jala Neti*** **Pot** is the nasal cleansing device very useful for beginners and perfect for travelers.

Even more… You don't need to be a yogi to get all benefits, the practice is easy to learn, and it can be done in about 2 minutes, easily integrated into ones daily routine just like showering or brushing the teeth. But when you start using it life will simply smell different.

What magic is in it and why it works so well? When you will be leaning over the sink…, as the water flows through the nasal passages, the dead-end sinus passages are flushed in a manner combining the force of gravity with the venturi-effect. A subtle vacuum is created which extracts the mucus and the toxins from the sinus passages into the flowing water.

Jala Neti is a very ancient yogic technique which has been passed on for thousands of years by the Yogis for both physical as well as deeper spiritual benefits. Nowadays it has been scientifically proven that nasal cleansing using warm salty water can be very effective and in some cases it is the best remedy on the long run for getting rid of the toxins in the sinus cavities.

Jala Neti is the most powerful tool to prepare you for proper breathing that will enhance and boost your energy.

Here are some of the benefits using Jala Neti nasal cleansing:

- It removes all the dirt and bacteria filled mucus from within the nose.
- It also helps to drain sinus cavities. This in turn, will help to reprogram the body's natural mechanisms against nasal infections, allergies, sinusitis and other upper respiratory complaints like sore throats and coughs, post nasal drip, inflammation of tonsils and adenoids.
- It reduces the tendency for mouth breathing by freeing the nostrils from mucus, so it is beneficial for illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis and helpful for those trying to give up smoking.
- It has a cooling effect on the brain by drawing out excessive heat, and is therefore beneficial for headaches, migraine and general mental tension.

- It is of great benefit for problems associated with the eyes, certain types of ear disorders; it improves sense of smell and taste.

- It has subtle effects on the pineal and pituitary glands which control the hormonal system. This has the harmonizing effect on emotional behavior.
- It helps to stimulate better powers of visualization and concentration and gives feeling of lightness and clarity to the mind.
- It reduces snoring particularly among people whose nasal passages are obstructed that make mouth breathing necessary.

Moreover, if you are a yoga practitioner Jala Neti is the most powerful tool to prepare you for Pranayama and enhance its energizing and balancing effect.

Next month we are going to explain what happens with our bodies when we fast and what yogic purification techniques can be used to help the detox process.

DESIDERATA

(Found in Old Saint Paul's Church, Baltimore; Dated 1692)

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be and whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.

Karma Yoga

By Aaed Ghanem

It is said that life is a transition to eternal vitality and bliss. The practice of *Karma Yoga* is one such path of life. Through this path, many have been able to achieve higher levels of consciousness and understanding. In previous issues, this topic has been discussed briefly. Let us expand on what we already know and gain a deeper appreciation for this type of yoga.

The word *karma* basically means and embodies action. Each person's actions from the day he is born until departing from this physical existence have their unavoidable impacts. The law and order of the universe tends to the balance of cause and effect of all actions. One has to grasp this concept in order to fully absorb the power of *Karma Yoga*.

> Perform action, being steadfast in Yoga, abandoning attachment and balanced in success and failure! Evenness of mind is called Yoga.
>
> Bhagavad Gita 2:48

Two main aspects include the surrender of the ego and selfless service towards human kind and all living beings (including Earth and all that It contains). The act of selfless service and having the intention to always do what is right will purify the mind and enhance clarity. *Karma Yogis* do not seek compensation or reward for their deeds. A life of service and action without expecting anything in return is liberating. They feel that the law of nature is working through them as an instrument of joy. There is no heavy load or burden. There is only fluidity and simplicity in which they move through life giving in any way they can as each opportunity presents itself. With the practice of nonattachment, fear and sorrow dissolve and all that is left is to do what is required. Acceptance of all success and failure without judgment is another important characteristic.

Giving can be done in any form. The intention of the heart is what really matters. Look inside yourself and ask, "What can I give here? How can I help? Where can I alleviate suffering? Who is in need of what I have to offer?" And it is important to note that your energy and resources will not be depleted. This is because the more you give, the more you will receive and be in tune with universal energy.

A Karma Yogi is one who is free from lust, greed, anger, egoism, hatred, jealousy and harshness. Instead, they acquire such traits as gentle words, fearlessness, big hearts, a loving social nature, acceptance and tolerance of everyone with no exclusion, adaptability, divine love, a balanced mind, unshakable faith, and a simple life with no intentional harm inflicted on anyone or anything. They also have the incredible ability to "bear insult and bear injury" as Swami Sivananda taught.

The practice of Karma Yoga brings many benefits. It instills humility, pure love, and a sense of oneness and connection with all. It also prepares the Yogi for knowledge of the Self. Love, joy and peace begin to radiate from the very core of your being. You rejoice in the wellbeing of others. The universe is generous and supportive of you as it reflects back to you your own generosity and supportiveness. And mostly, you approach unity through your devotion to the ultimate and service to all. Light falls upon your thoughts, transforming them into an everlasting stream of bliss and happiness, igniting your existence with Love and Peace.

Karma Yoga is a life style that can be attained through *seva,* the selfless involvement in all activities, as per teachings of **Swami Satyananda**.

Jalaleddine El-Rumi

Feeling Separation

Don't let your throat tighten
with fear. Take sips of breath
all day and night, before death
closes your mouth.

Pale sunlight, pale the wall.
Love moves away. The light changes.
I need more grace than I thought.

Art as Flirtation and Surrender

In your light I learn how to love
In your beauty, how to make poems.
You dance inside my chest
where no one sees you,
but sometimes I do,
and that sight becomes this art.

Recognizing Elegance

A craftsman pulled a reed from the reedbed,
cut holes in it, and called it a human being.
Since then, it's been wailing a tender agony
of parting, never mentioning the skill
that gave it life as a flute.

The Turn

Dance, when you're broken open.
Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.
Dance in the middle of the fighting.
Dance in your blood.
Dance, when you're perfectly free.

Yoga …A Cure for Modern Day Stress

By Mona Nasreddine

Since most if not all of us live a fast-paced lifestyle, and are constantly being bombarded with all kinds of stressful life events or “external stimuli”, we have gradually built up a "fight or flight" syndrome in our system. When stressful situations arise, we become tenses up; and even when the situation passes, we continue to carry within us the stress and tension. This scenario has a tremendous cumulative effect over time.

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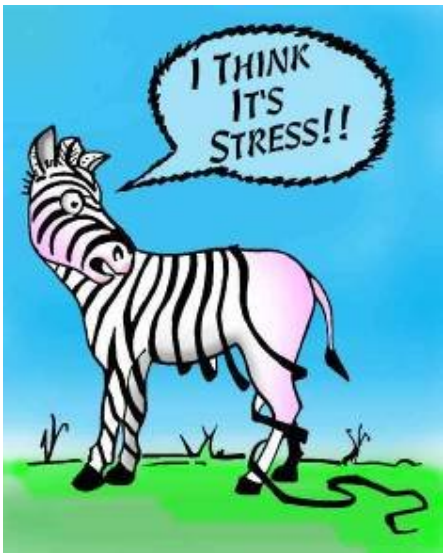
Practicing *Yoga* is one of the ways to reduce and eliminate stress from our bodies and thoughts

Stress is defined as the mélange of emotional and physical strain or tension caused by our response to pressure from the outside world, from “reality”. Stress has become a friend of the physical system; it has found home within our body and mind.

Stress affects all body organs and functions. It weakens our immunity and opens the door for different types of headaches, fatigue, ulcers, skin problems, muscle pain, anger, nervousness, despair and depression.

Practicing *Yoga* is one of the ways to reduce and eliminate stress from our bodies and thoughts. Yoga enhances the body's natural defense functions. The regular practice of yoga Asanas has been proved to promote the secretion of anabolic hormones, work to straighten the spine and improve the flow of fluids in it, stimulate the glands and lymph circulation throughout the body.



Stretch out all Stress!

Yoga stretching exercises help to unlock and release the tensions in the muscles before they can accumulate over time and become chronic physical conditions. Yoga increases mind-body coordination which leads to better management of stress and cultivates an overall feeling of well being.

Breathe out all Stress!

In everyday life, our breathing patterns tend to be shallow and irregular. This affects the exhalation process and builds up toxins inside the lungs. Yogic breathing exercises have shown to open up the airway passages and empower the diaphragm, allowing for a deeper inhalation and a slower longer exhalation.

Relax and Enjoy the Ride!

Relaxation is one of the main points of yoga practice. Scanning the body parts with awareness to relax them one by one is the main aim of relaxation postures. This rejuvenates the nervous system and helps in attaining a deep sense of inner peace. During relaxation postures, the mind is given the rest it needs from daily worries, judgments and frustrations.

Excerpt from

THE BOOK OF MIRDAD

By MIKHAIL NAIMY

As you feed on men and things so they feed on you. Be wholesome food to others if you would not be poisoned. When in doubt about the next step, stand still. What you dislike dislikes you; like it and let it be, thus removing an obstacle from your path. The most unendurable nuisance is to consider anything a nuisance. Take your choice: either to won all things, or nothing at all. No middle course is possible. Every stumbling block is a warning. Read the warning well, and the stumbling block shall become a beacon. The straight is the brother of the crooked. The one is a short cut; and the other, a roundabout way. Have patience with the crooked. Patience is health when leaning upon Faith. When unaccompanied by Faith it is paralysis. To be, to feel, to think, to imagine, to know - behold the order of the main stages in the circuit of human life.

Lotus Calendar
Anniversaries:
April 2, 1805- Hans Christian Anderson, Danish children's author
April 2, 1840 – Emil Zola, French writer.
April 8, 563 BC - Buddha Siddhartha Gautama
April 10, 1931 Gibran K. Gibran died in New York City
April 12, 1961 - 1st man in outer space (Gagarin)
April 16, 509 B.C. Sri Adi Shankaracharya born at Kaladi village in Kerala.
April 16, 1889 - Charlie Chaplin, comic actor, filmmaker
April 15, 1452 - Leonardo da Vinci
April 20, 1920 - Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah established.

Body Talks

Anatomy and Physiology of Hatha Yoga (3rd article)

Dr. Hisham Nasr

When you practice yoga, especially Hatha Yoga , you find yourself dealing with that same object which you met first when you were born and will leave last at the moment of departure. While practicing yoga process you learn to master this object and use it and transcend it… but first of all you have to know it. In Hatha Yoga you deal with the most familiar and yet most mysterious of all objects - you deal with your own body.

If ordinary people need only the body user's manual, yogis need a much more detailed one, a kind of developer's manual. In this series of articles we'll try to shed a light on these sides of our bodies' anatomy and physiology that we need to know as yogis to enhance our practice.

In The last issue we were discussing reflexes (1. Myotatic stretch reflex, 2. Clasp knife reflex, 3. Flexion reflexes.), and we talked about the first tow and we said that we can deal with them in such a way to get maximum benefits for our practice… did you think about examples?

"Muscles are smart beings that use reflexes to protect themselves"

Well, let us take a look first at the third reflex and then go to practical hints about "using" physiology in our yoga practice.

Flexion Reflexes

These reflexes are a whole group of reflexes that protect our body when we cause to ourselves physical pain. When we touch a hot glass of tea our hand withdraws back without us being conscious about the movement. This is because the pain alarm in the body calls for help and the flexor muscles come to rescues so they contract to bend the arm away from the offending object.

In Hatha Yoga we always differentiate between discomfort and pain. The feeling of discomfort is useful as it is a part of the training process. It shows the level of stretch we are working on in the moment and tells us that we are somewhere near our stretch limit. Pain is totally different. It is the voice of the body telling us we have exceeded the limit. Thus, we should listen to the body and try not to reach a point where this reflex is elicited.

Minimizing the Effects of Myotatic Reflex and Flexion Reflexes

1. **Avoid Bouncing**: whether you are bending forward or lifting your leg straight or going to any stretch avoid bouncing. Some people think that "falling" into the forward bend in Suryanamaskar helps them warm up better. Indeed this brings more harm than benefits. It causes the muscles to contract and shorten and makes it harder to stretch them afterwards. Go gently and slowly into the stretch and never push. Remember that muscles are smart beings that use reflexes to protect themselves, so don't go against their nature.

2. **Hold the stretch longer**: moving into different variations of an asana

quickly and not holding them enough time cultivates the habit of tossing, jumping and bouncing during yoga practice.

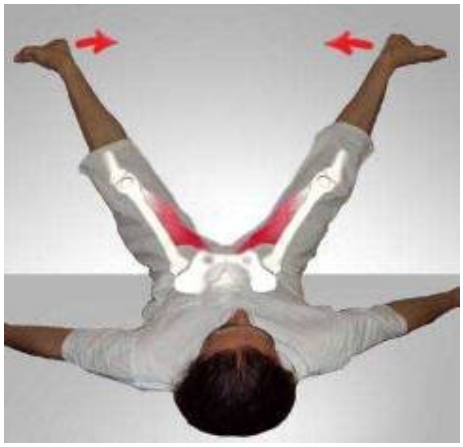
3. **Shortcuts?** Yoga practice is dancing with the rhythm of Life. In nature any breakthrough comes only after the accumulation of a long series of slight changes and preparations. The same thing happens in yoga. Sometimes you can experience a breakthrough (a successful headstand for example) but understand that this achievement is not a result of a leap. It is the result of practice and step-by-step accumulation of experience.

Pearls for practice: Perfect *asanas* can never be achieved by forcing and pushing. In your practice always move gently and consciously!

Using the Clasp Knife Reflex

As you remember, this reflex works in such a way that allows muscles to relax after intense contracting. So you can use this reflex to allow the hamstrings to relax and enjoy your levels best split or forward bend.

From "anti-split" to split: stretching the muscles of the inner thigh is always a hard mission especially when trying to go into a split or trying to sit in lotus (*padmasana*). In order to make it easier to open the hips or split, lie down on your back with your hips seated against a wall and legs stretched up by the wall. Split the legs apart to your maximum. Then fix your heals firmly to the wall and try to contract the muscles on the inner side of the thigh (*adductor muscles*) as if trying to bring the feet together but allowing the heels to restrain the movement. At the same time massage the tendons of these tensed muscles near the pelvis. This will give your body an impression that the muscles are contracted more and more. After that, relax and allow the legs to go apart, and you will notice that the angle



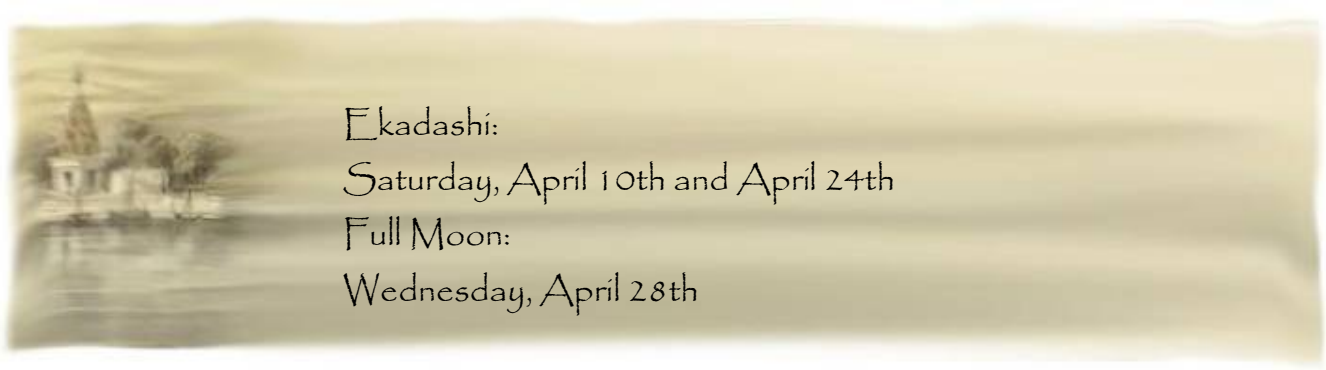
between the legs has increased.

Paschimottanasana the sitting forward bend: first try to go into the forward bend as u usually do. Remember the limit you reached. Then sit on your sitting bones once more with your spine straight and legs stretched in front of you, feet perpendicular to the floor and toes pointing to the ceiling. Inhale, stretch your body up and as you exhale stretch bend forward stretching the arms towards the toes, and before you reach the maximum bend contract your hamstrings for about 10 seconds as if you were trying to penetrate with your heels through the floor. Then relax the hamstrings (stop pressing with the heels down) and stretch more forward

and bend as if trying to reach with your abdomen to the thighs. You will notice that your forward bend is much better now.

Synchronize stretching towards the toes with inhalations and bending forward with exhalations. Always use your breath to enhance your stretch and feel more comfortable while holding any asana.

Read more about breathing and breath control in next issues.



Bassam El-Khoury April 2

Duna Abou Jaoudeh April 6

Mike Atalla April 11

Nadeen Mahfooz April 18

Happy Birthday!

In April the best time to use influence of the Moon empowered by its Zodiac position will be on Wednesday 21st & Thursday 22nd (the Moon waxes & these two days enters constellation of Leo).

Detoxify…

By Olga Pavlova

As summer is “knocking our doors”, we all want to feel light, beautifully fresh and energized.

We’ve talked a lot about organizing a Detox Retreat. Now the dates and location are finalized. We’ve chosen an auspicious Ekadashi weekend of May 7, 8, and 9; in a beautiful green fresh place in Ramlieh, surrounded by pines and cedars, where you will truly experience the restorative wellness of Nature. You don’t need to be an expert or an advanced yogi to join us No prerequisites are required. We’ll provide you with all necessary information and equipment. All together we are going to learn, share the knowledge we have and feel supported by the group. Sun rising above the pine trees, morning nature walk, two gentle yoga classes, workshops, sunset meditation and satsang are in our daily program.

Our goal is to provide you with a balanced structure for ongoing personal practice at home. During our workshops You are going to learn simple yogic purification techniques which are significant help for your yoga practice, especially beneficial to respiratory and digestive systems, positively affecting your wellbeing and health in general.

You are also invited to our ‘kitchen’ to put your hands on … to help and to learn the secrets of juice fasting, to prepare light fresh restorative vegetarian meals, so you will know how to prepare yourself for fasting, how to fast and how to break your fast next day for your maximum benefits. You will have also an opportunity to plant your own cedar tree, as we are staying in a cedars nursery.

Join us for the Detox retreat in a beautiful green fresh place in Ramlieh, surrounded by pines and cedars, where you will truly experience the restorative wellness of Nature

Next issue we are going to explain what happens with our bodies when we fast and what yogic purification techniques can be used to help the detox process.

Happy Birthday Soul Spa!

Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, there is now a breathing space for you to unwind and replenish your energy… It is Soul Spa that celebrated its' first anniversary on March 26 and organized an outdoor retreat in Dmit, Al Shouf on march 27th 2010.

The retreat was designed to detox the body and de-stress the mind. The onset of the program was an outdoor yoga class, given by Mr. Radwan Hindi, under the breath-taking pine trees in the midst of nature, clean air and serene sounds. The class gave the participants the chance to reconnect with mother earth and their surrounding. Every asana was a full workout on all level.

As a continuation to the re-energizing work, a workshop on Energy centers, also known as Chakras, was presented by Mrs. Ginni Ghaziri. In the workshop, careful detailed information on how these centers work, and how they affect our physical health, and how to balance them, was explained to the participants, who in turn had the chance to express and share their thoughts and experiences.

This successful retreat included also an appetizing and healthy lunch and concluded the Nature connection journey with a wonderful hike in the beautiful nature.

We invite you to join us in our next retreat and be sure you will end your day with a peaceful yet energizing experience.

Soul Spa is a unique place that offers a wide range of products and services to cater for all your wellbeing needs.

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A Special SATSANG
with
Jackmamian Family

"When ink joins with a pen, then the blank paper can say something", and when the Lotus Family gathers under the same roof, energy boosts and everyone gets high.

On Saturday, 10th of April, The Lotus Family gathered in Dbayih in a cozy atmosphere and enjoyed one of the most memorable evenings.

Thanks to Adroshan Jackmamian and his wonderful wife for their hospitality and Love. They made every one of the group feel as if in his own home.

The gathering was one of the best yogis meetings, where the sharing of knowledge and mutual communication brought delight and joy to the hearts of all.

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